

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 165 450

FL 009 921

AUTHOR Harris, J. G., Ed.; White, J. E. G., Ed.
TITLE Taking Stock 1977-78: Modern Languages in the Polytechnics.
INSTITUTION Centre for Information on Language Teaching, London (England).
PUB DATE Jan 78
NOTE 39p.
AVAILABLE FROM Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research, 20 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y5AP, England

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Opportunities; *College Language Programs; Colleges; *Higher Education; Language Attitudes; *Language Instruction; *Language Programs; Language Teachers; *Modern Language Curriculum; Social Sciences; *Technical Institutes
IDENTIFIERS *Polytechnics

ABSTRACT

The aim of the conference discussed in this report was to make a critical appraisal of the achievements of language teaching in the polytechnics and similar institutions, and to attempt to suggest lines for future development. All speakers were encouraged to be critical and provocative in order to stimulate conference discussions on how language teaching can be improved. After an opening address entitled "Modern Languages in the Polytechnics: Present and Future," specific addresses are presented along three themes with one or more speakers representing each theme. Summaries of discussion group reports for each theme are also presented. The first theme, "Where Have We Got To So Far?" includes a critical analysis of the achievements of language teaching in the polytechnics and other colleges. The second theme, "Languages and Social Sciences: How Can They Live Together?" encompasses two addresses, one on living with linguists and the other on bridging the gap. The final theme, "Languages in the Schools and in Higher Education: The Interface," covers output from schools, input to education, output from higher education, and feedback to schools. Conference conclusions, recommendations, and a list of participants are appended. (EJS)

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January 1978

Taking stock 1977-78:

Modern languages in the polytechnics

ED165450

Report of a Conference held by the
Standing Conference of Heads of Modern Languages
in Polytechnics and other colleges (SCHML)
at Sheffield City Polytechnic,
7-10 September 1977

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
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USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

Edited by J G Harris, Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology
and J E G White, The Polytechnic, Wolverhampton

Note

The membership of SCHML is made up of those responsible for the teaching of languages and related studies in the polytechnics and major colleges of technology etc in the UK. Throughout this report, references to polytechnics are to be taken to include those other major colleges which have developed a considerable amount of advanced languages work, including in some cases CNAAs degrees.

Published by CILT for SCHML

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ISBN 0 903466 18X

Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research
20 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AP

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Introduction .

The second major SCHML Conference was attended by 75 participants drawn from member colleges throughout the United Kingdom. Representatives of some of the technological universities and colleges of higher education were also welcomed, as was a member of staff of the National Institute of Higher Education, Limerick, Ireland.

The aim of the Conference was to make a critical appraisal of the achievements of language teaching in the polytechnics and similar institutions, and to attempt to suggest lines of future development. The topics were chosen to allow members to look critically at the past and speculatively to the future; to review one of the central problems affecting many languages departments - the relationship within courses between languages and social science subjects; and to look outside the internal concerns of member departments at relationships with language teaching in the schools.

The purpose of a stocktaking is two-fold - to see which goods have not yet been sold, and to assess current assets in order to discover what base exists for progress. The last SCHML Conference (Wolverhampton, 1974) was a successful one, held at a time when the full impact of CNAALanguages courses was making itself felt. In retrospect however, it was perhaps a rather self-satisfied conference, looking back over ten years of virtually constant expansion. A few dark clouds were already visible on the horizon, but had not by then affected the weather. Now, however, in an era of retrenchment, the climate is much less favourable. Hence all the speakers were invited to be critical, even provocative, in order to stimulate the Conference discussions on how language teaching performance in the polytechnics can be improved, given the new conditions.

SCHML was fortunate in obtaining lively and stimulating contributions from a distinguished group of speakers:

Reverend Canon Dr G Tolley, Principal, Sheffield City Polytechnic
R M Oldnall, Principal Lecturer in German, Lanchester Polytechnic
Dr R G Murray, Principal Lecturer in History, Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology (now Assistant Chief Officer, CNAAL)
Professor R B Tilford, Professor of Modern Languages, University of Bradford
D G Smith, Principal Modern Languages Adviser, Leicestershire LEA
A Hornsey, Head of Modern Languages, University of London Institute of Education
R Leeson, Deputy Director, Ealing College of Higher Education

These speakers provided an excellent starting point for the six discussion groups, in which all Conference members participated, on each of the three Conference themes.

J E G White, Head of Department of Languages and European Studies,
The Polytechnic, Wolverhampton and Chairman of SCHML
R N L Absalom, Head of Department of Modern Languages, Sheffield
City Polytechnic

(Conference Organisers)

1. Modern languages in the polytechnics: present and future

Opening address to the Conference

Dr G Tolley

- 1.1** The symptoms of the crisis in modern languages teaching - though it has been spoken of for so long it must now be a chronic condition - are described in different terms by various vested interests. However, to anyone concerned with longer term issues of direction and change in polytechnics certain features of the present picture are certainly not reassuring.

Some degrees have not yet established their value and validity. Student numbers will probably continue to fall. Problems in schools need long-term solutions. Sub-degree courses lack coherent objectives and languages figure little in technician course reform. Other disciplines face difficulties and will not be keen to help languages if this hampers their own efforts. Linguists cannot therefore evade the central question: What are modern languages for?

I shall make no special pleading for languages, since the problems are not unique. Four main areas require comment.

1.2 Staffing

Low staffing ratios in languages cause concern, less because of the pressure on resources than because they produce defensive attitudes and claims to uniqueness, which work against change. They are said to assure better teaching, and opportunities for research and course development. But only adequate numbers of staff and good quality are required for this, and departments with very favourable ratios feel so threatened that their productive effort ceases. College of education mergers have exacerbated the problem and their staff are also seen as those who trained the language teachers who have apparently been so ineffective in schools. Now is the time, therefore, for careful staff audits and planning, not frantic seeking to maintain student numbers. Project teams from polytechnics to open up contacts with employers, liaison officers working with chambers of commerce to back up export services, increased secondments to industry - all these are needed, with an emphasis on staff development to foster excellence, in the practical setting of the work of the department.

1.3 Courses

Recent years have seen remarkable achievements, involving new combinations with languages - *ab initio* courses and a move away from literature. Growth has, however, been smaller than in other

areas. Sub-degree and part-time degrees are static, and to prevent languages remaining subsidiary or service elements all kinds of combinations are proposed, desperately tacking them on to more popular subjects. Only linguists can remedy the resulting lack of coherence in the philosophy of language departments.

- 1.3/1 Languages are an important subsidiary for most professional courses, but, unlike maths, not central to them. Language teaching should be available on demand but, as resources are limited, new approaches must be found, going beyond the unfulfilled promises of the language laboratory revolution.
- 1.3/2 Despite the increased importance of the USSR, Japan, the Arab world, China and the EEC there has not been the expected surge of interest in languages. Modern linguists must then offer something relevant and worthwhile, though still preserving the conceptual and intellectual coherence of their subject.

1.4 Careers

The shift away from teaching is welcome, though not fully reflected in courses and attitudes. Employers have stressed the importance of languages for business, but either through laziness or because courses are off-putting, deficiencies in business performance due to language shortcomings persist. Language departments have not made sustained efforts to ascertain relationships between business performance and language facility, to open up careers other than teaching, research or interpreting, or to meet technicians' needs. Nor has the Institute of Linguists responded to the situation. The onus is on language departments to stress the centrality of languages in a wide range of professional careers.

1.5 Schools

- 1.5/1 The situation in schools is depressing. The objectives of language teaching have not been examined critically enough following the revolution in organisation. Green Paper references to 'a broader range of choices' are misleading in languages, where the choice is narrowed to French or nothing, and something is wrong if Government thinking on the need for urgent action is fairly reflected in the statement that 'a modern language should find a secure place for as high a proportion as practicable of pupils at least to the age of sixteen'.
- 1.5/2 Language teachers in higher education need to understand better all the factors affecting language provision in schools, including the working of the grapevine which ensures that school-leaver choices responds to social and economic move-

ments, especially now that much teacher-training - including in-service training - happens in colleges alongside other interests. The responsibility for changing the content of language teaching rests largely with polytechnic departments.

1.6 Planning ahead

The substantial resources committed to languages in higher education will be maintained only with a fight. A five-year national development plan is needed for languages in schools, higher education, employment and the professions, and the deterioration in interest in languages must be tackled. SCHML has a prime and formative role to play in all of this.

2. Theme A: Where have we got to so far?

A critical analysis of the achievements of language teaching in the polytechnics and other colleges

R M Oldnall

- 2.1** Although many colleges already had a tradition of language courses, including London University external degrees, before they became polytechnics, it was the growth of HND courses with significant language elements that really shaped teaching in the early sixties, relating advanced courses to 'modern' needs and ensuring proficiency in communicating in the language. The Robbins report and the newly founded CNAА gave added impetus.
- 2.2** The first CNAА languages board - understandably seeking comparability with university degrees - acted as a brake on college ambitions by welcoming originality in degree proposals only if this showed due regard for 'cerebration'. The resulting idea that languages were a skill rather than an intellectual discipline was shared by some linguists, especially in universities, and used by college management in establishing priorities for provision of resources. Relations between colleges and the Languages Board are much better now and most institutions offer languages in CNAА approved courses. Progress in extending opportunities, however, is slow, because other departments will not always provide enough time and are not easily persuaded that linguists have something valuable to offer.
- 2.3** The 1976 CNAА Report shows 22 language courses with 614 first enrolments, an average of 28, less discouraging than it sounds since some are single honours courses, but not very encouraging either, seeing that in 1975 (Summer) there were 16,919 'A' level passes in French and 6,225 in German. The fact that the 'A' level profile of these students still compares unfavourably with what many universities accept suggests colleges have made little progress in persuading the public that their courses are equal to, but different from, those of universities. 274 CNAА modern languages degrees were awarded in 1976, many to graduates who would have had no chance to prove themselves otherwise. The number will grow, but with a moratorium on new courses and continuing wastage, annual output will not exceed 500 by the 1980's, compared with over 2,000 from universities.
- 2.4** This combined annual total of nearly 3,000, too small given Britain's international role, reflects the low status of language studies. To argue that the supremacy of English makes foreign languages superfluous not only damages this status further but begs the question why languages are not considered - like other disciplines - to be concerned with developing analytic techniques which permit objective appreciation of the actions of people whose language is not English but who form part of the world of commerce, politics and technology.

- 2.5 The long-standing assumption that advanced language study must involve literature has been challenged by the provision of other disciplines such as history or politics. The reaction of those who felt their discipline was threatened led back, via the idea of 'cerebration', to the conclusion that non-literary language studies are mere skills, thus further depressing their status.
- 2.6 Since the introduction of language laboratories, progress in methodology has been slow. Early enthusiasm and experiment was dissipated, following political and pseudo-academic opposition to the spread of language teaching, in coping with harsh economic sanctions and staff-student ratios. More could have been done to help 'minority' languages in schools and, although pioneering of *ab initio* languages in degree courses represents real progress, there has been little research into the learning processes involved and no attempt to set up 'centres of excellence' offering teaching based on such research.
- 2.7 The declining status of languages is confirmed by the minuscule number of registrations for CNAAL higher degrees involving research into language studies *per se* (five awards to date and fourteen current registrations, far fewer than in universities), though lack of acceptable supervision is a factor.
- 2.8 The existence of SCHML and the holding of this Conference prove there has been some progress. But linguists remain preoccupied with individual colleges rather than with disseminating information to ensure co-ordinated response to problems, more research into language teaching and rationalised provision for 'minority' languages.

3. Theme B: Languages and the social sciences: how can they live together?

Living with linguists

Dr R G Murray

- 3.1** Although living with linguists - and linguisticians - can be very frustrating for social scientists, the tremendous advantages for economists, geographers, historians, politics specialists and sociologists stemming from closely integrated courses with languages make it important to identify the reasons for this frustration, in the hope that sullen hostility can thus be transformed into more productive creative tension.
- 3.2** Firstly, linguists demand excessive time and special 'practice' arrangements. Accepting this, social scientists tailor the fundamental requirements of their discipline to these demands, leaving no time for the independent reading and sustained thought associated with honours degrees. Linguists claim these contact hours are less taxing than the figures suggest, that little preparation or written work is involved and that with practice the process becomes easier. This overestimates the capacity of students, who have no time to complete other work because of language demands. Even greater reductions in time for social sciences follow - including abandoning optional lectures designed to stimulate thought.
- 3.3** The quality of the students is even more worrying. As there seems no necessary correlation between mimetic skills and intellectual ability, some competent linguists turn out to be ill-equipped to deal with abstract concepts, and unable to write even simple narrative sentences in English. This may be the fault of our education system but it causes distressing anxiety and hostility in first year students, incapable of rigorous systematic analysis and demanding only simple answers. The high drop-out figures for courses of this type suggest that some 35 per cent of the students lack the combination of skills needed for integrating languages and social science. Some students join these courses for the negative reason that they found literary studies intellectually disconcerting. They often struggle with the non-language element and really want some ideal 'languages-only' course. Neither linguists nor social scientists can do anything with these talking dolls.
- 3.4** The students' lack of confidence and consequent resistance to new disciplines is intensified by linguists' insistence on the objective of total fluency in languages (see paragraph 7.3). Many students, seeking the prize of a *distinction* in spoken language, would prefer to concentrate exclusively on this, over-valuing language skills and looking on other work as an intrusion. This emphasis on total fluency stems from the fact that many language teachers, having 'language and literature' degrees, were specialists in literary criticism and saw language skills not as an end but the means towards aesthetic

appreciation of works of art. Now, to preserve their specialist status, they tend to make the language an end in itself. Fluency therefore rules.

3.5 In 1974 the CNAA retracted its earlier distinction between 'skill and information' found in the language and 'theory and cerebration' found elsewhere. Some linguists have used this to try to remove the social science, to pursue the unobtainable total fluency, and to retreat from the real difficulties of integrating languages and social sciences. Happily such linguists are becoming fewer and an increasing number no longer see their professional careers linked to language skills. As more staff are appointed who have dual language/social science qualifications and the competence and confidence to deal at the appropriate level with language material drawn from the social sciences, the tensions are reduced. Discussion of social, political and economic phenomena becomes more rigorous and the levels of linguistic performance demanded more realistic. The staff involved often share the social scientists' concern at work-load problems and the shortcomings of some students, the dull uniformity of examination scripts and lack of time for independent study. Language and social science staff thus move towards a *modus vivendi*, and eventually perhaps an *entente cordiale*.

3.6 For this to happen, though, social scientists must make an honest effort to appreciate the difficulties of bringing students to a high linguistic level. They must approach their subject through the culture of the society whose language is being learnt, and accept that linguists are competent to teach aspects of social science. At least in the final year, work in the non-language discipline should ideally be in the foreign language, and if integrated courses develop successfully graduates able to teach in this way will come forward. Until then social scientists must work with their language colleagues not against them, to improve the study of languages applied to the analysis of the economic, geographic, historic, political and sociological context of societies which can only be fully understood through their linguistic tradition.

Bridging the gap

Professor R B Tilford

3.7 Any attempt to integrate languages and social sciences in a degree course is subject to organisational, psychological and academic constraints. Attempts at integration by using teachers who cover both disciplines can generally be discounted as few can combine the two roles respectably in the long term, though the sympathy of the convert with the discipline he has left behind can be very valuable (see paragraph 7.2).

3.8 Organisational constraints

Integration is hardest for old established, single discipline courses used to functioning independently, and is most likely to succeed when the department is based not on the discipline but on the course. It improves administrative and academic coherence if finances are distributed to courses, not subjects, and staff can all be appointed to the same department. Since increasing barriers between disciplines make this difficult, the only solution is to appoint staff fully committed to the philosophy of the course and ensure that those administering it have political skills of a high order.

3.9 Psychological constraints

These often result from defensiveness masking a sense of insecurity in the discipline. Many linguists equip themselves to teach area studies, but when they have to work closely with social scientists either they feel underqualified or their social science associates develop a proprietary attitude, stressing their own - often slight - qualifications to teach this work. The resulting tension undermines the coherence of the degree and this can only be offset by good fortune in one's colleagues and skilful management by department heads.

3.10 Academic constraints

The gap will not be worth bridging unless both poles of the degree are designed to include an element of theory and analysis. If social sciences are reduced to *Landeskunde*, and language to acquiring appropriate vocabulary and translating texts in relevant registers, the course will not be academically viable. Area studies must have a background of social science, and language skills a background of linguistic theory, to provide criteria and tools of analysis or the course will remain a welter of incoherent information.

3.11 If organisational, curricular and psychological problems are solved a course capable of bridging the gap would involve four main components:

3.11/1 *Practical language skills* Conversation and laboratory classes and translation involving - in the later stages - specialised vocabularies.

3.11/2 *Linguistics* Modern linguistics applied to the language, introduction to general linguistics (Years 1 and 2), structure of language (Years 2 and 4), stylistics - analysis of linguistic characteristics of texts containing various types of language.

3.11/3 *Regional studies*: Modern history (Year 1), contemporary society (Year 2), and government and politics, or law, or the economy (Year 4).

3.11/4 *One social science subject*: politics, economics, law or sociology. An economics course might contain: economic theory (Year 1), British and international economies (Year 2), the economy of the country whose language is being studied (Year 4).

3.12 Such a course could involve *one* language only. Two languages would entail too much breadth and too little depth (see paragraph 7.5).

3.13 Every effort must be made to relate subjects to each other and achieve cross-fertilisation. In Years 1 and 2 the possibilities are limited, priority being given to teaching new disciplines and improving language skills. History and society seminars will use foreign language documentary sources, and language work will help to supplement knowledge acquired in such seminars, but the courses will run in parallel and the language of instruction will be English.

3.14 In the final year integration happens, though at a superficial level, when the social science is applied to the language area, and the foreign language becomes the language of instruction. More important is the coming together at this stage of:

- (a) study of the structure of the language (giving theoretical tools for analysing different types of language);
- (b) stylistics (undertaking this analysis);
- (c) application of the social science to the language area (incidentally acquainting the student with specialised vocabulary needed as a basis for stylistic analysis);
- (d) practical language exercises involving specialised texts (political, economic, etc).

Thus languages and social science approach each other and a healthy tension is maintained, without language becoming a mere tool for social scientific analysis, or the social science a handmaiden for language studies.

3.15 Cross-fertilisation could reach its highest point in stylistics, particularly if the approach is socio-linguistic. Not only multidisciplinary, but interdisciplinary study becomes possible for the social scientist and the linguist (eg of authority and power, whether in politics, industry or the family). This may, however, ask too much of already overcrowded undergraduate courses.

4. Theme C: Languages in the schools and in higher education: the interface

Output from schools,
input to higher education

D G Smith

- 4.1 There are problems in the schools, but encouraging signs too. Views of the state of affairs existing in the past probably see it as better than it really was, and in any case the country gets only the education service it deserves and is prepared to pay for. Student motivation is undoubtedly different however and the typical product is changing.
- 4.2 The reasons for these changes include: reorganisation of secondary schools, problems of liaison in two-tier systems, and the size of schools. In small eleven-to-sixteen schools, second language options are limited; some second foreign language options consistently provide small numbers, indeed, Latin has almost disappeared and Spanish is decreasing. Apathy and doubts about the usefulness of learning modern languages, often considered a 'difficult' subject, persist in schools, even among some languages staff. Languages staff recruitment is a problem too. Linguistic and literary competence is often better than methodological competence, which is often patchy. Motivational factors lead to a decline, particularly in the number of boys opting for languages, which in turn further affects the nature and content of the course. Teacher attitudes exacerbate these difficulties, as does the nature of the public examination system.
- 4.3 Despite working party recommendations, very few non-specialist courses, aiming, for example, at Institute of Linguists qualifications, exist. The sixth form course remains dominated by prose and literature, and few teachers seem to have thought out how to enable pupils to make the transition from an 'O' level course which may not have included translation into the foreign language.
- 4.4 Literature courses have changed least of all. Few schools have worked out coherent reading programmes and teaching often involves a painful process of translation. Bizarre combinations of authors (Corneille, Montesquieu, Brassens) occur. Literature, it is said, encapsulates the habits and thought patterns of a country, but this means little to many sixth formers who can cope only with pure narrative. Poetry, psychological analysis, pre-20th century works and *explication de texte* are best left to the tertiary stage, and new sixth form examination proposals may force such a development.
- 4.5 The emphasis of 'A' level must shift towards greater oral competence in a wider range of activities, reading in a more relevant range of materials (including journalism) and a greater range of options to match the wider scope of tertiary courses. Moreover, 'A' level must become more useful in itself, perhaps with a smaller literature com-

ponent or with none at all. Except in German and Spanish, schools now are producing fewer 'A' level language passes, and over 80 per cent of those with an 'O' level language do not study it further. These must include many competent linguists. Those who have 'A' level, often in one language only, are ignorant of what the tertiary sector has to offer, probably because the provision is now confusingly varied. At the same time fewer candidates are applying to many traditional modern languages departments.

- 4.6 How, then, can colleges help? They can enable students to begin literary studies at a stage when they are more likely to be able to cope with them (but wider options must be preserved too), and to start a second foreign language. They can provide realistic careers advice and cooperate in attempts to reform 'A' level. They must make more contact with schools and teachers and take stock of present provision, for polytechnics may have diversified too much and traditional universities not enough. The enlarged opportunities for studying languages with 'unusual' subjects must be continued, however.

**Output from higher education,
feedback to schools**

A Hornsey

- 4.7 At the University of London Institute of Education we welcome graduates from the polytechnics on the PGCE course. They are neither accorded preferential treatment nor discriminated against. They are offered places on their merits. Once the course begins we are usually no longer aware of which students are from polytechnics; it was only in preparation for this talk that I went back to the record cards as a means of identification. In fact polytechnic graduates must have fitted in easily because problem students - the ones who come to a head of department's attention - over the past ten years and more than 500 graduates - have not been from polytechnics but have tended to be foreign nationals or mature students coming to teaching late in life, who may find it difficult to adjust.

- 4.7/1 In 1976-77 we had 52 students in modern languages and five of these were from polytechnics:

<i>Students 1976-77</i>		<i>Degree class</i>	
London	20	I.	6
Provincial	14	II.1	16
Oxbridge	5	II.2	21
Polytechnic	5	III.	2
Ireland	2	Pass	1
Europe	6	Other	6

The top student had a third from Cambridge! Five of the six

students with firsts were in the top thirteen. (The rank order takes practical teaching into account, so the myth that a first is a liability for a teacher does not seem to be supported). The best polytechnic graduate was 22nd, the worst 49th. All the polytechnic graduates had 11.2s on entry and all passed.

- 4.8 Polytechnic graduates do present two problems. First, some are occasionally unable to meet our language requirement at the interview, part of which is carried out in the foreign language. They are at a disadvantage if their course is very broad-based (containing three languages and perhaps other subjects as well) and they have not attained real competence in their main teaching language. This is a dilemma, because although we believe that a language student must have a good command of the language he intends to teach, we are also aware that many headteachers find it convenient (not necessarily educationally desirable) to have staff who offer several subjects. Secondly there are polytechnic students who, having 'done' no literature since school, feel unable to tackle sixth form work. They can be helped in this respect, but they take a lot of convincing. Sadly, while sixth form language work continues to be so dominated by the 'study' of literature, perfectly adequate students will continue to feel incompetent.
- 4.9 What, then, do we want of the ideal polytechnic graduate? We hope that he will both know the language and know about the language; that he will offer his pupils a good model of someone who can tell the time, say, in French, but who is sufficiently aware of the language forms to realise that most of the numbers are pronounced differently in front of *heures* from when they are used on their own and that the language presented to children will have to take this into account. Similarly we hope that his experience of the language will be sufficient to enable him to make informed choices about the lexis of his lessons: between, for example, the different appropriateness of *schmeißen* and *werfen* or between *marron* and *brun*. And we hope that even in an applied language course one of the applications he has met will be the language used for literary purposes - not a study of literary history but an attention to some literary texts so that he has the confidence to take on such work in school. Failing that, polytechnic lecturers may have to take up cudgels against current 'A' level practices.
- 4.10 When this graduate comes to us we will try to encourage him to be resourceful, to be open to more than just the conventional language teaching possibilities and to be genuinely concerned that his pupils learn something worthwhile. Provided he is not too old, not too politically extreme and not so spoon-fed that he cannot think for himself, our efforts are sometimes rewarded.

5. Theme A reprise: Where do we go from here?

Some thoughts on the higher education language scene for the 1980s

R Leeson

- 5.1 After ten years of solid achievement this is a good time, despite the present difficulties, to take stock and consider the likely effects on language teaching of changes in the world economic, political and social scene. Abroad there is the increased importance of Japan, the Arab states, China and Africa. At home economic cutbacks, graduate unemployment (leading to questioning of the value of higher education) and the effects of comprehensive reorganisation in the schools have undermined confidence and emphasised the need for an imaginative response to new needs.
- 5.2 Changes in school mean that entrants to language courses may no longer have 'A' level, and course content and design will have to cater for different starting levels, including *ab initio*. A wider range of opportunities will have to be offered and there is an urgent need to support languages other than French. It will be increasingly important to make contacts locally with schools.
- 5.3 Changes in society require greater provision of recurrent education, involving part-time and mixed mode courses, despite the difficulties of the year abroad and of maintaining motivation and skills over a five to seven year course. Linguists must meet the increased vocational interests of students by developing rapid learning methods and teaching the sort of language users need. This involves collecting data on what is really needed and which languages to teach.
- 5.4 Why has Britain's membership of the EEC not meant a great leap forward for languages? Why do so few courses offer languages with administration, law or international studies? How realistic is the language policy of the Council of Europe and why have other countries been more successful in fulfilling its goals? English is already seen as the major trading language so the impetus for more foreign language learning will not come from outside the profession - the teachers must face up to this fact. The story of languages for industry and overseas trade has been a rather dispiriting one - despite some excellent work - because of a lack of national policy. As Professor Reeves concludes in his article in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* of 22nd July 1977 effective local action is, therefore, the way forward for linguists, though SCHML and the National Congress could play an important role.
- 5.5 The further spread of English as a *lingua franca* has led to the development of new methods and materials to teach it as a foreign

language. Other language teachers must be prepared to learn from these.

- 5.6 Changes in our knowledge of language and its functioning must also involve reassessment of methods and materials, based on research findings, particularly in socio-linguistics. The Council of Europe work on notional categories and communicative competence and on the 'threshold' concept does not seem yet to have been properly evaluated or used by linguists. It could provide another way to respond to vocational needs by providing the sort of language of greatest use to students.
- 5.7 Progress in the use of audio-visual and video aids and language laboratories must be examined to see if they are being fully exploited and incorporated into teaching. The CNA report on its investigations into language teaching methods in polytechnics will show more clearly what is happening and how the overall use of these aids can be improved.
- 5.8 Linguists seem to have retreated from language research and there have been changes in their concept of what constitutes academic worth. The problem of pursuit of largely illusory goals linked to academic status and the desire to have their own degree course, the problem of the conflict between depth of study in course content subjects and language teaching skills, and considerations of academic orthodoxy and personal inclination may all have contributed to this.
- 5.9 Clearly then a difficult, but exciting period lies ahead. Linguists must rethink their aims in the light of changing needs, convince industry of the value of languages, evaluate new teaching methods and use those best suited to their needs. To restore confidence in the value of language learning at a time when students' interests are increasingly vocational, teachers must provide the courses students need, not the ones they think they ought to want.

From these efforts modern languages teaching will emerge all the stronger.

6. Summary of discussion group reports on theme A

Discussion groups chaired by:

J D Winslow
P Aspinall
P Collins
B S Fitzjohn
R W Hill
Dr C E Kinch

6.1 Achievements of the polytechnics in languages teaching

Dr Tolley had been asked to be challenging, even provocative, in his opening address, and polytechnic linguists must take note of his points and consider them carefully, without necessarily accepting them. There is however a tendency for polytechnics to 'sell themselves short' and it is important that staff should be conscious of the successes and innovations of the polytechnics in the languages sphere.

6.1/1 One major achievement of the 1960s and '70s stands to the credit of the polytechnics with some of the technological universities: they have created an alternative form of modern languages degree, and established beyond all question its viability in terms of academic standards and student demand.

6.1/2 There are also many other achievements:

- (a) the creation, with CNAA, of a system of academic validation as a safeguard of standards (a system which incidentally provides as a bonus an important 'staff development' exercise in the construction of courses);
- (b) the range of courses offered, both for degrees and for other qualifications- HND, secretarial linguist etc (the variety is a virtue, though it may contribute to the impression, which Dr Tolley voiced, of a lack of common philosophy or orientation);
- (c) the close integration of language teaching with subjects other than literature;
- (d) the design of relevant language courses for specific purposes.

6.1/3 Within the courses offered there are innovations and developments in content and style:

- (a) the early and intensive use of the target language;
- (b) the use of a thematic approach to advanced language work;
- (c) the development of intensive *ab initio* courses and support for 'minority' languages;
- (d) an increased attention to oral and aural work;
- (e) the use of language laboratories in advanced work;

- (f) a greater variation in modes of assessment;
- (g) the exploitation of links with institutions and industries abroad.

6.1/4 Finally, their achievements have included giving access to languages courses in higher education to a much wider range of students. It has been proved that those with 'A' level grades traditionally considered unpromising can reach the highest standards of language performance, and new career horizons have been opened up for many students who would formerly have found their way blocked.

6.2 Constraints

A number of constraints have had to be faced in reaching the present situation. Some, such as the wider spread of student ability, have been successfully overcome by development of new teaching methods. Others still remain:

- (a) the relatively static numbers of 'A' level passes in languages;
- (b) the problems in schools caused by the upheaval of reorganisation, the lack of a secure place in the curriculum for languages (especially those other than French), the urgent need for a re-appraisal of the traditional sixth form syllabus to allow scope for the non-specialist and for those not interested in literature;
- (c) some areas in which polytechnic staffing conditions are less favourable than those for university colleagues: eg the high level of contact teaching hours, the lack of sabbaticals to allow research time, the necessity to disperse energies over a wider spectrum of courses;
- (d) the low level of ancillary staff support (clerical, secretarial, technician) which slows down production of new materials;
- (e) one or two spheres in which demarcation lines between higher education and further education have affected development in some parts of the country - eg in hampering the development of special purpose courses for businessmen at elementary and intermediate levels;
- (f) the lack of defined responsibility for validation in some types of course - eg secretarial linguist; outside bodies such as CNAA and BEC touch on the courses but do not include them, while DES neglects them as far as mandatory grants are concerned;
- (g) problems of recruitment in a situation in which traditional university courses often still hold more social prestige and schools frequently appear to know little of polytechnic courses.

6.3 Information about polytechnic courses

A considerably greater effort needs to be made to encourage and inform students who want relevant and practical languages courses. Information about polytechnic courses should be in every school, tertiary or sixth form college and college of further education; the

publication by CILT for SCHML of *A guide to language courses in polytechnics and similar institutions, 1977*, should help in this respect. There is perhaps a need for a new survey of the careers of languages graduates (and particularly of CNAAs graduates) so that students can be given more information about career prospects. The pilot survey of national manpower requirements in modern languages in the United Kingdom (published as *The use of foreign languages in the private sector of industry and commerce in the United Kingdom*, K Emmans and others, Language Teaching Centre, University of York, 1974) was carried out at a time when there were few CNAAs graduates, and has been outdated by events such as Britain's joining the EEC. One of the most promising features for polytechnic courses is the fact that polytechnic-trained graduates are beginning to appear as teachers in schools, and this should bring considerable benefits in terms of the esteem in which courses are held, with consequent advantage to recruitment. Finally, polytechnic teachers and SCHML on their behalf need to make greater contact with and exercise more influence in bodies such as the Schools Council and Her Majesty's Inspectorate, some members of which appear unaware of what is offered in languages in polytechnics.

6.4 The needs of the next few years

In considering future needs, there are a number of areas in which consolidation is needed and a number of lines of desirable development:

- (a) more work needs to be done on identifying the precise skills needed by the linguist in industry, and the types of course needed by industry to train staff. Coupled with this is the necessity to convince industrialists of the value they can obtain from employing people with language skills;
- (b) there is a need for a clearer definition of aims and objectives for all courses;
- (c) after several years during which the main development work has been on degree courses, more attention should now be paid to part-time courses (degree and non-degree courses), postgraduate courses, special purpose courses, 'topping-up' courses, and to transferability between courses;
- (d) while it has been necessary to ensure that polytechnic language teachers adapt their work to a social science content, often by undertaking research in social science areas, the balance may now need to be shifted back towards language work. The latest developments in linguistics need to be assessed, adapted and exploited by co-ordinated research on methodology, to support the language teaching;
- (e) SCHML could play a part in arranging for pooling of information, and for collaboration in work on methodology. More cross-fertilisation of ideas and information on methods and materials is needed, and SCHML could be an enabling agent, bringing together people working in the same areas.

7. Summary of discussion group reports on theme B

Discussion groups chaired by:

**P H Hubsch
J G Harris
C H Haworth
A Dobson
T A Goodison
A Dawson**

7.1 Integration of languages and social sciences

There are two main types of course in which social science subjects and languages are studied together. In the first type, where a language is taught as a 'tool' for the social scientist, a number of interesting, specially orientated language courses have been devised. The second type of course is the typical polytechnic languages degree, in which one or more social science subjects have replaced literature as a means to an understanding of the foreign culture. Here more problems remain, particularly in respect of the integration of languages and social science studies within the course. Now that increasing numbers of students opting for non-literary languages degrees are doing so for positive rather than negative reasons, it is important that the right balance and degree of integration of these studies be achieved. The more vocational a course is, the easier it is to achieve integration, since the achievement of a vocational end provides a constant incentive. This is seen clearly in international marketing and languages courses. Less specifically vocational courses require careful thought to prevent polarisation between language and social science elements. The way in which most polytechnic languages teachers have been trained hitherto means that some social science subjects, such as history, are much more easily integrated with languages than are others like sociology or economics.

7.2 Staff

Close attention to staffing and staff development is the obvious key to achieving integration. Many languages teachers need to train themselves or be retrained in the social science areas if they are to be successful in teaching languages on integrated courses, and the need for facilities for such retraining must be stressed. It is important to use the skills and knowledge of appropriate native speakers and to recruit into teaching some of the new generation of languages/social science graduates who are the long-term solution to the problem. Professor Tilford's reservations about the competence of any one individual to teach both a language and a social science are perhaps somewhat overstated (see paragraph 3.7). Even if his reservations are accepted, the sympathy for and familiarity with the social science area, engendered by joint courses, are of the greatest importance for the language teachers (and *vice versa*).

7.2/1 Similarly the social science teachers on such courses must adapt to the new needs. Relatively few claim or make use of language skills, and it is important that they should develop such skills; at present, they are frequently accused of an insular attitude towards foreign cultures. The physical proximity of groups of languages and social science teachers working together on a course is important - an institutional organisation, based on the course rather than the discipline may be more conducive to good teamwork - and such things as joint visits by a social scientist and a linguist to students placed abroad may be helpful.

7.3 Aims

Apart from questions of the nature, attitude and background of the staff concerned, the other important need is the clear definition of the aims of subjects included in any course. 'Total fluency', as Dr Murray described what he saw as the linguists' apparent aim, is not really the general aim which language teachers seek (nor even, some would say, a teaching concept they recognise) (see paragraph 3.4). Certain linguistic objectives need to be maintained; on a mainstream languages degree it is not so easy to select specific objectives for emphasis as it is on a language for special purpose course. An 'active proficiency' in the four macroskills is perhaps a better statement of the outline aim. Clearer objectives in selection, grading and use of materials are also important in fully integrating the language work with the social science subjects. On the social science side, the teachers must accept the necessity of tailoring their disciplines to serve a modern languages programme. The need to select their material and to accept that less can be taught than in a single/joint honours social science degree is paramount.

7.4 Research

The need to establish a greater body of research in area studies and in languages is increasingly felt. The graduates of polytechnic-type languages and social science courses should be competent to specialise in either area. Their research must normally define itself either as social science research or as linguistic research, though some projects, on the language of particular social science contexts, bridge the gap. It is also important to encourage team research combining both social scientists and linguists. Department research and development projects should stress course related research, even if this has sometimes to be at the expense of individuals' published work.

7.5 Course construction

In planning a course containing languages and social sciences, the primacy of the concept of the course as a whole over the individual discipline and skill inputs cannot be too strongly stressed. The

balance between language objectives and the quantity and nature of the social science elements needs very careful consideration to ensure integration. Selection of material and concentration on the essentials of the subjects chosen is important. Each institution may strike a different balance between language skills, linguistics and the social sciences. The model of a course proposed by Professor Tilford (see paragraph 3.11) (one language plus a social science plus linguistics plus regional studies) does not seem a happy solution, particularly because it limits the student to a single language, when all evidence points to an increasing preference on the part of students for two languages.

7.5/1 Most polytechnic languages teachers do not share the view that only one language should be taught. Linguistics (and especially socio-linguistics) is felt by some to offer an appropriate bridge between languages and the social sciences, but others feel it can be overstressed. In any event it is clear that the student opting for this type of course must accept a heavy workload. (This could be less if it were not necessary to teach some languages *ab initio* - if schools could be encouraged to offer 'minority' languages at least to 'O' level, perhaps on a zoned basis, this problem might be smaller).

7.5/2 Many languages teachers conclude that only one social science subject should be included in a course of this type to avoid too great a diversity of content. This would bring the problem of limiting student choice, though it is possible to conceive of a situation in which a number of polytechnics agree to adopt a common 'general social science' first year, with specialisation in one social science area at each institution thereafter, allowing students to select their preferred subject by changing institutions before the second year if necessary. A number of obvious pressures militate against this idea, however.

7.5/3 In considering the heavy workload of such courses, and in particular the heavy contact hours which are customary, the concept of 'total study time' rather than 'contact hours' is useful, to avoid disputes between linguists and social scientists over allocation of hours. Student attitudes, too, are often affected by the apparent imbalance between high contact hours and less independent study in languages, and low contact hours with a high degree of independent study for the social sciences. They too need a careful explanation in terms of 'total study time'.

7.5/4 Other points which are important in course planning are:
(a) the need to plan the year abroad as another bridge between the language and social science subjects; if not

carefully designed it may cause the integration of the course to break down;

- (b) the use of foreign *lecteurs/assistants* and the planning of their oral work, to enhance integration;
- (c) the use of joint seminars involving linguists, foreign *assistant* and social scientist, held in the foreign language if the social scientist has sufficient language competence, at least in aural comprehension.

7.5/5 It must not be forgotten that integrated courses of this type make greater demands on students than traditional single or even two-discipline courses. It is vital to ensure at recruitment interviews that the student understands the challenge he is taking on. Tensions are inherent in any interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary course, and care must be taken to see that they are understood and alleviated. They may be exacerbated if integrated courses prove by their nature more vulnerable to resource constraints than say, modular courses, but this should not be seen as inevitable. Above all it is important to ensure that students thoroughly understand the links between the different parts of their course; it is not sufficient to assume that they will make the connections for themselves, and a lack of the sense of the links may cause a damaging breakdown of morale. For this reason the period of induction to the course and especially the ultra-careful introduction of the social science disciplines, new to language students, are of prime importance.

7.6 Although the subject of integration is a difficult one, without any single right answer, a great deal of progress has been made by the polytechnics and some of the technological universities. This is one of the areas of major achievement, and in many cases significant contributions are now being made by linguists to the social science aspects of area studies courses, particularly in the context of the individual European nations or states, with which social science colleagues are not always familiar.

8. Summary of discussion group reports on theme C

Discussion groups chaired by:

**R Swithenbank
J W Coutts
A C Root
Miss M Tyler
P Donaghy
P Gold**

8.1 Problems in schools affecting higher education

There has been much discussion over the past two or three years about the 'crisis' in languages in the schools. Much has been unnecessarily alarmist, so that a self-generated crisis threatens. Little concrete evidence has been advanced about declining standards, and some of the problems which exist may be no more than temporary, a reflection of the undoubted disturbance caused by reorganisation of secondary education. Nevertheless there are some disquieting signs, not least an apparent decline in status of foreign languages in schools. It is good that a much larger number of pupils than ever before now has the opportunity to learn a foreign language in school, but this has led to a shortage of teachers and to the problems of teaching across a wider ability range. In some schools the particular form of the options scheme has militated against foreign languages, and especially against second foreign languages. French has been reinforced as the main language taught, and threatens to overwhelm the provision of other languages. Finally, languages are not apparently perceived as attractive enough (or vocational enough) to persuade pupils to continue with them up to and beyond 'O' level.

8.1/1 Polytechnic staff wish to do whatever they can to encourage the inclusion of a foreign language in any 'core curriculum' and to support in whatever ways are possible the provision of other languages as alternatives or additions to French. Many polytechnics already offer 'minority' languages *ab initio*, so maintaining the possibility of students taking German, Italian, Russian or Spanish in higher education even though they have not done so at school. This programme will obviously continue, but most teachers hope that efforts will not be slackened on this account to retain these languages in the schools sector too. Some attempt, perhaps, needs to be made by language teaching organisations to work out and publish a succinct statement of the justification for the obligatory inclusion of a foreign language in the secondary school curriculum, and of a second foreign language as an option (the work of the National Congress on Languages in Education, information on which is available from CILT). In some urban areas experiments might be made with zoning schemes for the provision of different second (or alternative first) foreign languages.

8.2 GCE 'A' level

One other major problem exists in the relationship between language teaching in schools and that in polytechnics; this is the nature of the present 'A' level examination. There is a very strong feeling that a fundamental reappraisal of the syllabus is needed: the present syllabus, almost unchanged since the 1920s, is self-perpetuating. Its limited choice of set books, conducive to a 'literature by rote' approach, has led in many cases to an over-teaching of literature, which may be the reason for the relative unpopularity of languages in the sixth form. In general, school languages teachers have not taken up the few alternative syllabuses which have been offered, largely because of their own 'language and literature' degree background.

8.2/1 The needs of polytechnic degree courses and traditional university courses are not identical in this respect, the main prerequisite for a polytechnic post-'A' level course being a basic level of linguistic competence. The literature element of 'A' level is largely irrelevant for most polytechnic courses, and 'A' level grades are poor predictors of degree classification. High 'A' level grades do not even necessarily indicate a predilection for literary or academic languages courses as distinct from those emphasising practical skills, since the 'A' level grades of students on very practical, specifically vocational non-degree courses are often higher than those of degree students. The development of a new syllabus, the redefining of language objectives, and the introduction in all GCE boards of the possibility of taking a civilisation or institutions option instead of literature, are urgent necessities. If 'A' level is replaced under the 'N' and 'F' proposals this may give the necessary impetus to rethinking, to provide a course which meets the needs of all sixth form students - those who do not intend to pursue their studies further, those who intend to take non-literary courses, and those who will continue to follow the traditional literary degree route.

8.3 The polytechnic graduate as a teacher of languages

In considering some of the problems of language teaching in schools and their effect on the polytechnic sector, it should be remembered that there is a relationship in the reverse direction, since a number of CNAAs graduates are now taking up careers in teaching. Alan Hornsey pointed to two areas where problems may occur (see paragraph 4.8).

8.3/1 In some cases, polytechnics might be emphasising the practical skills to such an extent that degree students were not gaining an analytical awareness of language, which they would need as teachers of foreign languages. If this is so, then attention clearly needs to be given to course design to

ensure that the deficiency is remedied. Most polytechnic teachers agree that such an awareness is an essential part of linguistic competence and expect to include it within their language teaching aims; it is equally important that language teachers should be aware of developments in applied linguistics to keep their own 'awareness' alive.

- 8.3/2** The second area of difficulty is an apparent reluctance of polytechnic graduates entering teaching to tackle the literature element of the present 'A' level syllabus. Because their own studies have not been on literary degree courses, they do not feel competent to teach set-books. Those polytechnic teachers who have seen the students graduate are in fact in no doubt about the students' capacity to undertake the task. They have the critical faculties and have acquired the habits of analysis to enable them to teach literature at this level; what they lack is the confidence rather than the competence. Obviously, account must be taken of this lack of confidence in the postgraduate certificate of education year, where they need to be shown that they have the competence to do the job. In any case too much emphasis should not be placed on a literary degree as the only possible foundation for teaching literature at this level, and polytechnic graduates' promotion prospects should not be adversely affected by the type of course they have undertaken. Eventually the problem will be solved by the move towards an alternative 'A' level syllabus, a move which will be further stimulated by the entry of greater numbers of polytechnic graduates into teaching. Graduates of the new style courses will have a distinctive and very valuable contribution to make in the development of the changing sixth form, by their teaching of one or two languages and social science aspects of the foreign cultures. They will be able to bring a new impetus to modern language teaching in schools.

8.4 Polytechnic/school cooperation

The direct assistance which polytechnics can give to help school languages teachers in facing their current difficulties is obviously limited. Polytechnics could perhaps offer courses in minority languages for sixth form pupils, where schools could not make such provision, but this might be more within the domain of colleges of further education. *Ab initio* courses in higher education can compensate for the difficulty of providing 'minority' languages in schools - but are therefore of direct help to the student rather than the schools. Similarly short courses and part-time courses in area studies, European institutions etc, or in linguistics and language teaching methods, enabling school languages teachers to update their knowledge as part of in-service training, are a general facility for school teachers rather than a direct and immediate help with current problems.

8.4/1 Where polytechnics can help however is in adding their voice to that of school teachers to try to improve the climate of opinion about languages. In liaison with teachers and LEA languages advisers, polytechnic departments can talk to careers officers and to management in commerce and industry, to ensure that the benefit to the country of a wider spread of foreign language competence among those at work is realised; this can take place at local level. At national level SCHML could, for instance, make representations to the CBI, or other employers' organisations, ascertaining their views of their language needs and stressing the prospects that could be achieved if the country produced more linguists. If languages teachers could undertake a continuing dialogue with industry and commerce, given the fact of our increasing involvement in Europe, it should not be too daunting a task gradually to move the climate of opinion to one which saw foreign languages as a need rather than a frill.

8.5 Liaison with schools

Liaison with schools can obviously be fruitful for polytechnics also from the viewpoint of making known to schools and their pupils what is offered by polytechnics. Sixth form days, one or two day revision courses for 'A' level (perhaps offering a different angle on set texts), 'sampler' courses in the less commonly taught languages, academic lectures in schools or simply invitations to foreign films and plays are all ways in which good relations can be built up. Such liaison is a necessity if the achievements of polytechnics in the languages sphere are to become more widely known. More and better information services to schools are also important; schools need information in a systematic form and the SCHML/CILT *A guide to language courses in polytechnics and similar institutions* will be a considerable help in enabling schools to find out about polytechnic courses.

8.6 Career outlets

Finally, there is a need for a new investigation of career patterns of linguists, and especially of polytechnic graduates, to give a clearer indication of career outlets. These need to be widely publicised, with further emphasis on the fact that a foreign language competence is often a considerable asset in a job even if the individual concerned is not primarily employed as a linguist. If information of this nature can be presented to school pupils, with proper evidence, there should be no need to worry about the numbers coming forward for higher education in languages. With the very wide spectrum of courses offered in the polytechnics, potential linguists now have more choice than ever before, and every individual should be able to find a course which is tailored to his precise needs.

9. Conclusion

Chairman's summing up

J E G White

- 9.1 During the Conference, some members have felt that polytechnic language teachers have been subjected to criticism that is unfair. But the speakers were expressly asked to be critical, since it is invaluable to be subjected to the cold shower of an objective outside appraisal (just as our courses are the stronger for the outside appraisal of the CNAAL). The range of speakers - a polytechnic director, a university linguist cum social scientist, a polytechnic historian, an LEA adviser, a university department of education lecturer, - have been able to give a whole spectrum of outside views, which, reinforced by the 'insiders' views of two polytechnic linguists, cannot fail to help our reassessment of our work.
- 9.2 Despite the gloomy cumulative effect of the criticism, there has been a good deal which is more positive. The word 'crisis' has been heard much less frequently than has been fashionable in recent modern languages conferences. Above all, it has been pointed out how much has been achieved in a very short span - fifteen years since the first non-literary languages degree at Bradford, eleven years since the first CNAAL languages degree, eight years since the first polytechnic was designated. With the speed of the advance, there is no reason for wonder that a pause for consolidation has been needed. But now is the time to generate a new effort to redefine our aims, to discover our assets and capitalise on them - hence our stocktaking.
- 9.3 Our speakers have shown us some of the areas on which we need to reflect, possibly even where we need to put our house in order. They have pointed to the doubtful viability of some courses, the little work at technician level (though Dr Tolley overlooked the advanced secretarial-linguist courses) (see paragraph 1.4), the conservatism induced by our defensiveness and claimed uniqueness, the lack of a development plan; to the need for clear definition of our aims, and for depth of analysis in both language and the social science components of integrated courses; to the necessity to improve liaison with schools, and to take an interest in developments in languages teaching in the secondary sector; to the flexibility of response we need to maintain in order to distinguish the needs of the consumers and to serve them; and finally to the need to underpin our work by more research on language teaching and learning.
- 9.4 Many other points have come out of the discussion groups. There has been sometimes a tendency to talk of polytechnics and universities as if they are opposing monolithic blocks, when we know in fact that the line between them in language courses is not distinct, and that both sectors have many problems in common, to which they could

and should react in common. Similarly, there was some talk of the ignorance of schools about what is happening in polytechnics but this may sometimes mirror an indifference amongst some polytechnic teachers to the problems of school language teaching. In both cases, more interest, involvement and mutual assistance are needed.

9.5 The group discussions have produced a welter of ideas and recommendations, from the often repeated cry for a change in 'A' level, through the ideas for exchange of information on methods research to the demand for a survey of the careers of polytechnic graduate linguists. Many of these recommendations were addressed to SCHML. SCHML will certainly look at them and take what action it can - or rather the Conference members will, since SCHML *is* its members, it has no secretariat and no existence apart from its members. If the jobs need doing then individually, in groups or collectively we must take the initiative and get on with them.

9.6 It is difficult to summarise concisely the main points of a conference such as this, but if I have to pull out three main threads from the whole of our meetings they would be:

- (a) the need to redefine our aims, and to draw up a plan for our progress;
- (b) the need for a new research impetus, particularly in the area of methodology;
- (c) the need for bridge building:
 - (i) with the schools from which our students come and to which some return as teachers;
 - (ii) with industry and commerce, whose language needs we should be able to serve better;
 - (iii) with the employers and professions which take our graduates.

These three needs form a positive package for us to take away, think about and act upon.

10. Conference recommendations

The Conference, through its speakers and in its discussion groups, produced a large number of recommendations, covering many aspects of modern languages teaching in the polytechnic sector and elsewhere. A number of the more significant ones are listed below. All the recommendations which are appropriate for action by SCHML will be the subject of discussion at future plenary sessions.

10.1 Liaison with industry

- 10.1/1** "I would like to see small project teams drawn from a number of polytechnic departments, on a regional basis perhaps, working in depth to open up more contacts with employers. I would like to see liaison officers appointed to work with chambers of commerce and employers' and trades' associations, to assist in back-up export services. I would like to see more, many more, secondments into industry, here and abroad"

(Dr Tolley)

- 10.1/2** "To restore confidence in the value of modern language learning in a vocationally orientated period, we must take steps to research the needs (of industry and other language users) to provide the service needed, rather than what we think they ought to want."

(R Leeson)

- 10.1/3** Representations should be made by SCHML to the CBI and other professional institutions, stressing the need for language competence....., there should be a continuous dialogue between polytechnic language teachers and representatives of industry and commerce.

(Discussion group C2 and others)

10.2 Career opportunities

- 10.2/1** "There is an onus upon departments of modern languages to give a much more positive lead in stating the centrality of languages in a wide range of career opportunities; ... it is the .. deficiencies and shortcomings arising from insufficient attention to languages that will have to be stressed."

(Dr Tolley)

- 10.2/2** The polytechnics must help schools by making realistic careers advice available.

(D G Smith)

- 10.2/3** Career possibilities (open to linguists) should be widely publicised, emphasising that a language competence is often beneficial, even where a person is not primarily employed as a linguist.

(Discussion group C3 and others)

- 10.2/4** SCHML should make available to prospective modern linguists a careful and realistic assessment of career patterns of polytechnic graduates and diplomates, (based on a survey not of first jobs but of unemployment two or three years after graduation).

(Discussion groups A2, B3, C2 and others)

10.3 GCE 'A' level examination

- 10.3/1** "Polytechnic languages teachers should cooperate with those in schools to reform the 'A' level examination ... the emphasis must shift towards greater oral competence in a wider range of activities, reading in a more relevant range of materials, ... and a greater range of options to match the wider scope of tertiary courses."

(D G Smith)

- 10.3/2** SCHML should support reforms of the 'A' level syllabus, ... a fundamental reappraisal of 'A' level should encourage other GCE boards to follow the direction taken by AEB on 'A' level syllabus.

(Discussion groups, *passim*)

- 10.3/3** SCHML should investigate the correlation between 'A' level grades and degree results on polytechnic courses.

(Discussion group B4 and others)

10.4 Minority languages

- 10.4/1** "We have much to do ... in encouraging a rationalisation in the provision of study opportunities in the so-called 'minority' languages."

(R M Oldnall)

- 10.4/2** Polytechnics should help to rationalise provision of minority languages in schools; in conjunction with HMI, language advisers and professional associations, SCHML should encourage schools to offer provision for second foreign language

teaching in selected centres on a zonal basis.

(Discussion group B2 and others)

10.4/3 Concern was expressed about the disappearance of second languages from schools. Two suggestions were put forward:

- (a) for better rationalisation. In a large urban area some schools could offer as first language something other than French;
- (b) for polytechnics to make a more positive contribution, eg by stimulating interest and offering courses in languages other than French to sixth formers.

(Discussion group C4)

10.5 Liaison with schools

10.5/1 "Polytechnics must make more contact with schools and teachers."

(D G Smith and discussion groups, *passim*)

(A number of specific suggestions have been mentioned in the summary of the discussion groups on theme C)

10.6 Action for SCHML

10.6/1 SCHML should investigate the constraints on the development of courses arising from the operation of the financial pooling arrangements and from demarcation lines between higher education and further education.

(Discussion group A1)

10.6/2 SCHML should make possible a pooling of information and materials, and establish a means of identifying colleagues and departments doing work on similar themes, to facilitate collective research and development.

(Discussion group A2)

10.6/3 SCHML should make a systematic investigation of student wastage from language courses and publish regular reports.

(Discussion group B3)

10.7 Conclusion

10.7/1 "I see the need for a five year development plan for languages nationally, embracing schools and higher education, and employment and professional needs."

List of Conference participants

R N L Absalom	Sheffield City Polytechnic
M Alpert	Polytechnic of Central London
I F Ariza	Manchester Polytechnic
P Aspinall	Manchester Polytechnic
A B Barton	North Staffordshire Polytechnic
J Bramley	Newcastle-upon-Tyne Polytechnic
A Bromfield	National Institute of Higher Education, Limerick
G Brooke	Polytechnic of Central London
Miss J Butterworth	Manchester Polytechnic
R Coleman	Bristol Polytechnic
P Collins	Oxford Polytechnic
J W Coutts	Buckinghamshire College of Higher Education
D Cutler	Bolton Institute of Technology
A S Dawson	Liverpool Polytechnic
A Dobson	The Polytechnic, Wolverhampton
P Dodd	Kingston Polytechnic
P J Donaghy	Newcastle-upon-Tyne Polytechnic
Ms L Duff	Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology
W H Ernest	Buckinghamshire College of Higher Education
B S Fitzjohn	City of Birmingham Polytechnic
C Fox	Bulmershe College of Higher Education
Miss F Gibb	Times Higher Education Supplement
P J Gold	Sheffield City Polytechnic
T A Goodison	The Polytechnic, Wolverhampton
Dr R E Gurney	Middlesex Polytechnic
C P Harris	Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology
J G Harris	Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology
P Hartley	The Polytechnic, Wolverhampton
C H Haworth	Polytechnic of the South Bank
P M Hesketh	HMI
R W Hill	Teesside Polytechnic
A Hornsey	University of London Institute of Education
Dr P B Houldsworth	Leeds Polytechnic
P H Hubsch	Newcastle-upon-Tyne Polytechnic
Dr C E Kinch	Liverpool Polytechnic
J A Lalaguna	Polytechnic of North London
G J W Lavy	Polytechnic of the South Bank
Miss E A Lawrance	The Polytechnic, Wolverhampton
R Leeson	Ealing College of Higher Education
Dr E M Lillie	Ulster College, The Northern Ireland Polytechnic

J D Manton	University of Loughborough
G M Matthews	CILT
A L Morgan	Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology
Dr R G Murray	CNAA
R M Oldnall	Lanchester Polytechnic
Mrs F Pape	Trinity and All Saints Colleges, Leeds
J L de Peon	Thames Polytechnic
D Player	Thames Polytechnic
W R Powell	City of London Polytechnic
Mrs A M Ridler	CNAA
A C Root	Kingston Polytechnic
Miss S Rosenak	Middlesex Polytechnic
Ms B Rowe	Hatfield Polytechnic
H Seelig	Middlesex Polytechnic
Dr G Shaw	Bristol Polytechnic
R Simpson	CBEVE
D G Smith	Leicestershire LEA
E J Snape	Middlesex Polytechnic
R Swithenbank	Polytechnic of North London
G Thomas	Leeds Polytechnic
Professor R Tilford	University of Bradford
G Townsend	Liverpool Polytechnic
Miss M Tyler	Polytechnic of Central London
Mrs A J Walmsley	Colchester Institute of Higher Education
M B Ward	Sunderland Polytechnic
J D A Warren	Oxford Polytechnic
Mrs I Wells	Thames Polytechnic
R Wessely	Sheffield City Polytechnic
J E G White	The Polytechnic, Wolverhampton
Miss H M Williams	Sheffield City Polytechnic
Ms I K J Williams	Ealing College of Higher Education
Ms N K Willson	Homerton College, Cambridge
J D Winslow	Liverpool Polytechnic
Ms G Woolridge	Manchester Polytechnic

Acknowledgements

The Executive Committee of SCHML would like to thank the following people, whose different contributions to the success of the Conference and the production of this report have been invaluable:

The Principal of Sheffield City Polytechnic, for the facilities provided.

The domestic, catering and clerical staff of the Polytechnic's Totley site for their attention to the comforts of the Conference.

The speakers, for their addresses and their permission to publish the summaries.

The discussion group chairmen, who with minimal notice conducted and reported on their proceedings.

The Conference secretaries, Maxine Crummie, Wendy Jones and Diane Wise, students of the Diploma in Languages for Business course at Wolverhampton Polytechnic, who laboured long and hard to produce the Conference material.

CILT (and in particular Vaughan James and Barbara Newson) for their help in the production of this report.